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SUBJECT: 2009 RWANDAN FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SURVEY
REF: REF KIGALI 747

¶1. (U) Summary: The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda released the 2009 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis and Nutrition Survey. The survey analyzes nutrition trends over time by examining the extent, depth and causes of food and nutrition insecurity and vulnerability in Rwanda. Key findings in the survey are: rates of 52 percent and 4.6 percent among children for stunting and wasting respectively; and households with considerable dependence on agriculture, including agricultural laborers are especially vulnerable. The survey recommends increasing agricultural output, creating a vulnerability reduction strategy, developing vocational skills, and developing supplementary feeding and targeted nutrition programs. End Summary.

Key Questions

¶2. (U) The survey focused on answering five key questions: what populations currently face food insecurity and malnutrition; how many are there; where do they live; why are they food insecure/malnourished; and how can food assistance and other interventions make a difference in reducing poverty? Surveyors collected data between February and March 2009 from 5400 rural households.

Findings and Recommendations

¶3. (U) At the national level the survey found a 7 percent malnutrition rate among women of reproductive age (15-49 years). Rates for chronic and acute malnutrition among children are 52 and 4.6 percent respectively. There was a statistically insignificant change in rate among children from the previous survey that was completed in 2005. However, according to the study, the percentage of underweight children decreased from 20 percent to 15.8 percent. (Note: The percentage of underweight children is an indicator used by the UN to measure Millennium Development Goal 1. The goal is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. End Note.) According to the study the highest stunting rates (55 percent) are among the population with considerable dependence on agriculture, including farm laborers. Geographically the most food insecure households are in the districts of Nyabihu, Ngororero, Nyaruguru, and Nyamagabe.

¶4. (U) According to the survey factors such as female-headed households, the presence of a chronically-ill person, and cultivation of less than 0.1 hectare decrease food security. Contrarily, ownership of livestock and diversity of agricultural production are associated with greater food security. According to the survey, the most frequently reported shocks that reduce food security are drought, irregular rains, and dry spells.

15. (U) Due to the diverse nature and sources of vulnerability, the key recommendation of the survey is for a broad-based, multi-sector approach that integrates food security, nutrition, and disaster management programs with the national poverty reduction program. The survey also recommends that the GOR increase agricultural output, develop vocational skills, and develop supplementary feeding and targeted nutrition programs for children under five years of age, as well as school-age children and women of reproductive age.

16. (SBU) Comment: Although the GOR has made great strides in increasing agricultural productivity, chronic and acute malnutrition continue to effect the population. Farmers, on average, have access to approximately one acre of land to grow food for their family, which when combined with high rainfall variability may render them food insecure. Following the survey period, the GOR embarked on a nationwide campaign with its partners to identify and treat severely malnourished

children. The campaign, now concluded, distributed food supplements and therapeutic milk, provided nutritional services and education, and developed demonstration family gardens. The GOR response was coordinated by the Ministries of Health, Local Affairs, and Agriculture. Emergency response and nutrition education are a component of the GOR agriculture investment plan (reftel). Ministry of Agriculture nutrition support is part of a coordinated national effort with Health, Education and other Ministries. End Comment.
SYMINGTON